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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001571

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/09/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PRT QAL-E-NOW: BADGHIS GOVERNOR SET TO PROFIT FROM
A GOOD OPIUM HARVEST

Classified By: POLCOUNS Sara Rosenberry for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: During an April visit to the Badghis district of Murghab, PRToff was told by local police that 80 percent of the district's poppy crop had been eradicated. Personal observations, reports from the Police Support Team (PST) Commander and other PRT units strongly indicate that far from being an eradication success story, Murghab stands to have a bumper opium harvest in 2007. There are strong indications that both the District Administrator and the Provincial Governor are enriching themselves on the opium trade, even as the Governor pockets money from eradication efforts. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Unusually large amounts of rain in Badghis Province have translated into bumper crops and happy farmers. Unfortunately, in the northern districts of Murghab and Ghormach this means larger than average opium crops as well as wheat. On April 16, during a PRT presence patrol to Murghab district, PRToff was briefed by ANP Commander Abdul Amid on the province's Governor-Led Eradication (GLE) program. Amid stated proudly, although unconvincingly, that 80 percent of the opium in Murghab had been eradicated leaving only the 20 percent located in the more remote and inaccessible parts of the province. (Note: UNODC reports that GLE teams have eradicated only 16% of last year's cultivation level. End Note.) He added that the eradication teams had concluded their work in Murghab and were now operating in neighboring Ghormach district. The numbers quoted by Amid mirrored those provided by Governor Mohammed Nasim on April 14 in the Provincial Capital, but it soon became apparent that these estimates were grossly inaccurate.

¶3. (SBU) PRToff traveled around the district capital of Murghab for five days evaluating the delivery of recent flood relief, and it was clear that every village in the fertile environs circling Murghab city is producing large amounts of poppy. Most farmers have planted their poppy behind large mud walls or at

least 20 meters away from main roads, but many of these fields are readily apparent from major roadways and are located within 20 kilometers of the district capital.

¶4. (C/NF) As part of the overall PRT presence mission the Police Support Team (PST) was in Murghab at the same time as PRToff and reported sighting large amounts of poppy in both Murghab and Ghormach districts during their joint patrolling missions with the Afghan Highway Patrol (AHP). The PST Commander arranged a meeting for PRToff with local AHP Commander Haji Gulbudin (please protect) to discuss corruption and poppy cultivation. Gulbudin is a rarity in the Province in that he is widely seen by locals as honest and uncorrupted. He also has the confidence of the PST Commander. He opined that in reality less than 30 percent of the district's opium crop had been eradicated and after the meeting had his men escort the PRToff to a valley containing multiple poppy fields located in an area "cleared" by the eradication teams.

¶5. (C) Gulbudin asserts that the large poppy crop is a direct result of government involvement in the opium trade. He stated that District Administrator Haji Seifoldin Homedi called all local village elders in and offered them protection from eradication if they paid him a portion of the proceeds. Gulbudin stressed that a percentage of the money paid to Homedi was in turn give to Nasim. When asked how he knew the Governor received part of the proceeds Gulbudin responded that "opium money was why he named his

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relative to the position of District Administrator." Gulbudin also confided that during an April 18 shura he was in a small room with Nasim and the district administrators of Murghab and Ghormach when Nasim asked both of them for the money they owed him for their positions. Gulbudin stated that he was nearby talking to another person but overheard the conversation clearly. Reportedly Homedi responded that the poppy crop was good so they would be able to pay Nasim "soon."

¶6. (SBU) The PST Commander reported that Ghormach is also "full of poppy." He also relayed that local Kuchi families in Ghormach district report that ANP officers out of uniform purchase poppy resin from them and resell the product for twice as much at the provincial bazaar. Local residents report that the officers come out of uniform to make the purchases because when they come in uniform it is to tell them not to grow poppy.

MONEY FROM BOTH ENDS

¶7. (C) In an almost bizarre turn of events Nasim appears to be attempting to increase his capital flow from poppy eradication by passing fictitious expenses on to local populations. After an armed attack on an eradication team destroyed a tractor, Nasim demanded that the village nearest the attack pay \$15,000 USD in damages. This is locally a contentious issue as complaints over his repetition of this demand at the April 18 Shura lead to his early closing of the event. The owner of the tractor recently came to the PRT to ask for compensation for his tractor. According to the owner, he was forced by the ANP to rent his 3 tractors to the GOA and was compensated roughly half the \$120 per hectare the Governor stood to receive according to the GLE reimbursement scheme. (NOTE: This complaint, in itself, is not damning. GLE reimbursements are intended for all governor expenses. It does not necessarily mean that tractor rentals

command \$120 per hectare of use. END NOTE) The tractor's owner was dismayed that he had only received \$2,000 for his destroyed tractor that he valued at over \$16,000. Nasim had reportedly told him \$2,000 was all he could pay him, but if he wanted more he should see the PRT. All indications are that the farmer has accepted his loss, which means Nasim stands to pocket whatever he can extort from the local village for the damaged tractor.

GOVERNOR'S CLAIMS NOT CREDIBLE

18. (C) While the Governor has claimed that eradication has been a resounding success, the Ministry of Interior is neither pleased with the pace of eradication nor with the success of counter-narcotic activities in Badghis province. Deputy Interior Minister Daud wanted to send the centrally-directed Afghan Eradication Force (AEF) to the province in early May, but conflicts with planned ISAF operations for the same time period and with other AEF deployments made this plan untenable. UNODC's reporting also calls into question the Governor's claims. According to the UNODC, the governor's forces have eradicated a total of 196 hectares in Murghab and Ghormach districts, while last year the two districts combined to cultivate 1658 hectares of poppy. UNODC's Winter Assessment Survey predicted that poppy cultivation would increase in each of these two districts, and provincial claims of 80% eradication in Murghab cannot be taken at face value.

COMMENT

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19. (C) Regardless of the final amount of confirmed poppy eradication, it is difficult to imagine that Badghis' cultivation level will drop this year. Between the favorable weather and the strong suggestion of political protection/involvement in narcotics production, the conditions are ripe for another strong harvest. Several sources stated that Homedi, whom his relative Governor Nasim illegally appointed to the district administration post, is protecting crops, and this raises the possibility that the governor, himself, may enjoy a substantial income from the impending opium harvest.

WOOD